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Youth Movements and Democratic Processes in Afghanistan - An Analytical Study from 2010 to 2020

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1. Introduction

Afghanistan, with one of the youngest populations globally[1], has long grappled with the challenges of a tumultuous socio-political history. This research is an attempt to examines the youth movements and democratic processes in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2020, a transformative period marked by transitions in governance, economic challenges, and attempts at societal modernization. Afghan youth, who comprise over 63% of the population under the age of 25[2], are at the forefront of this study as agents and subjects of change in their society.

The study delves into their role in driving democratic practices, focusing on their participation in elections, grassroots activism, and policy reforms. It also considers the significant barriers they face, including inadequate access to education, widespread unemployment, and political marginalization, which collectively hinder their effective involvement in nation-building. By employing secondary data from credible sources like government reports, UN agencies, and other research works, this research critically analyzes how youth engagement shapes Afghanistan's democratic landscape.

A blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches is used to interpret the role of youth in Afghanistan's democratic processes. Quantitatively, official statistics provide insights into literacy rates, employment levels, and participation metrics. Qualitatively, the study explores narratives, historical accounts, and thematic patterns related to youth empowerment and political participation. The research aims to bridge gaps in understanding the unique position of Afghan youth and their transformative potential, offering insights for policymakers and scholars seeking sustainable developmental strategies. Afghan youth have historically played a significant role in political and social transformations. From the anti-colonial resistance in the early 20th century to the progressive movements during Amanullah Khan's[3] rule, youth activism has shaped Afghanistan's political landscape. More recently, movements like the Tabasum Protest (2015), the Justice for Farkhunda Movement (2015), and the Enlightenment Movement (2016), The Uprising for Change movement (Junbesh-E Rashtakhiz-E Taghir),

[1] United Nations Population Fund, "UNFPA Afghanistan," *UNFPA*, accessed March 15, 2025, https://www.unfpa.org/data/transparency-portal/unfpa-afghanistan.

[2] UNFPA Asia Pacific, "UNFPA Calls on the Global Community to Stand With Women and Youth in Afghanistan," *UNFPA Asia Pacific*, accessed March 16, 2025, https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/news/unfpa-calls-global-community-stand-women-and-youth-afghanistan.

[3] Anna Larson, *Transformative Politics in 20th Century Afghanistan: Lessons for Today*, in *Incremental Peace in Afghanistan*, ed. Anna Larson and Alexander Ramsbotham (London: Conciliation Resources, 2020), 45. https://www.c-r.org/accord/afghanistan/transformative-politics-20th-century-afghanistan-lessons-today.

2017 have shown the continued relevance of youth as political actors in demanding justice, equality, and reform.

The focus on youth movements and democratic processes in Afghanistan is significant for multiple reasons. Afghanistan is categorized as a "pre-dividend" nation, reflecting its high fertility rates and rapid population growth[4]. This youthful demographic presents an unparalleled opportunity for societal development if appropriately harnessed. However, the youth face systemic barriers that threaten to undermine their potential. These include low literacy rates (47% for individuals aged 15-24)[5] limited access to stable employment, and deeply ingrained gender disparities. The socio-political context amplifies the importance of this study. Afghanistan has undergone decades of conflict, leading to fragmented social structures and a lack of coherent national identity. The youth, in many ways, are the key to fostering unity and rebuilding the nation. Their active involvement in democratic processes could catalyze addressing deeply rooted challenges such as corruption, political instability, and social exclusion. Conversely, failure to address their needs could exacerbate existing inequalities, fueling discontent and social unrest.

Another critical aspect of this topic is the evolving role of youth in shaping Afghanistan's political landscape. Afghan youth have shown increasing interest in political participation despite systemic barriers, often through informal channels like activism and digital platforms. The rise of digital activism has provided Afghan youth with alternative platforms for political engagement. Social media played a crucial role in organizing movements such as the Enlightenment Movement (2016) and the Uprising for Change (2017)**,** allowing activists to mobilize support and amplify their demands beyond traditional political channels[6]. This engagement highlights their potential to drive change, even in the face of significant adversity. Findings of this research aim to contribute to policy frameworks that promote inclusive governance, equitable access to education and employment, and enhanced political representation for young people.

[4] UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, *Afghanistan – Education Equity Profile for Adolescent Girls* (Kathmandu: UNICEF ROSA, 2019), https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/5491/file/Afghanistan%20%E2%80%93%20Education%20Equity%20Profile%20for%20Adolescent%20Girls.pdf.

[5] Education Policy and Data Center, *Afghanistan Education Equity Profile* (Washington, DC: FHI 360, n.d.), https://www.epdc.org/node/5947.html.

[6]Muhammad Rachimoellah, Putri Handayani Lubis, and Nindya Juwita Utimadini, "Digital Activism and Political Change: Challenges of Social Media's Impact on Political Development," *Journal of Middle East and Islamic Studies* 11, no. 2 (Special Edition, October 12, 2024): 6, https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1107&context=meis.

2. The Power Structure and Youth in Afghanistan

Afghan youth remain largely excluded from the country's power structure despite the formal democratization of its political system after 2001. While two main perspectives on power exist one viewing it as mere ability and the other considering both ability and legitimacy[7] Afghanistan's governance aligns more with the latter. However, in practice, young people are often used as tools during elections but are sidelined once leaders secure power. Government institutions remain dominated by older individuals, leaving educated youth unemployed and without meaningful decision-making roles. Access to key power resources such as media, wealth, and institutional support is concentrated in the hands of political and tribal elites, further marginalizing young people who lack financial backing and influential networks[8]. In response to this exclusion, youth-led movements such as the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers[9], Young Activists Network for Reform and Change[10], and Young Women for Change[11] have emerged, advocating for political inclusion and challenging the existing power dynamics. However, deep-rooted structural challenges persist. Afghan politics remain heavily shaped by personal and tribal interests, where patronage networks and clientelism determine political alliances, limiting opportunities for youth participation. Institutional inefficiencies and the absence of clear functional roles among government bodies further restrict young people from integrating into governance. Additionally, the political elite, having secured personal wealth and privileges, lack the motivation to drive societal change, leading to stagnation. Addressing these issues requires fostering inclusive governance, enhancing transparency and accountability, and dismantling systemic barriers such as ethnic divisions, patronage politics, and institutional inefficiency to create a more equitable political landscape for Afghan youth.

3. Youth Movements in Afghanistan

Afghan youth movements have played a crucial role in shaping the country's political and social landscape, advocating for freedom, democracy, social justice, and national independence.

[7] David F. Luckenbill, "Power: A Conceptual Framework," *Symbolic Interaction* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1979): 97–114, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/si.1979.2.2.97.

[8] Anna Larson, Noah Coburn, and United States Institute of Peace, "Youth Mobilization and Political Constraints in Afghanistan," United States Institute of Peace, 2014, https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/wps/usip/0029989/f_0029989_24271.pdf.

[9] UK Parliament, *Written Evidence Submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee*, October 2024, https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/12064/html/.

[10] Bakhtar News Agency, "Youth Activists Network for Reforms & Change Urges for Transparent Elections," *Bakhtar News*, February 3, 2013, last modified May 4, 2020, https://www.bakhtarnews.af/en/youth-activists-network-for-reforms-change-urges-for-transparent-elections/.

[11] Young Women for Change, accessed March 18, 2025, https://youngwomenforchange.org/.

From the early struggles against oppression to the establishment of Kabul University in 1931, these movements significantly contributed to raising political awareness and mobilizing youth for change. The rise of key organizations such as Vish Zalmian, Watan, and Khalq, led by influential figures like Mir Gholam Mohammad Ghobar and Dr. Abdul Rahman Mahmoudi, marked a shift towards organized political activism, particularly among urban youth. The first major youth-led political demonstration took place in 1952, protesting government manipulation of the National Assembly elections, setting a precedent for future political engagement[12].

Throughout Afghanistan's modern history, numerous youth-driven political parties and organizations emerged, including the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan[13], the National Oppression Party[14], and the Progressive Democratic Party[15], among others. These movements and political entities played a pivotal role in expanding democratic participation, advocating for legal reforms, and challenging authoritarian rule. Despite internal contradictions and external pressures, Afghan youth movements have consistently been at the forefront of political resistance and reform, striving for an inclusive and progressive society. Their legacy underscores the potential of youth activism in shaping Afghanistan's democratic future**,** making their historical contributions a vital area of study in understanding the country's political transformation.

4. Major Youth Movements in Afghanistan from 2010-2020

The convergence of rising expectations among Afghan youth and diminishing socioeconomic opportunities, coupled with a lack of government capacity to address these issues adequately, has played a significant role in shaping youth protest movements in Afghanistan since 2015. Following the 2014 presidential election, a series of protest movements emerged, introducing a new dynamic to Afghan politics. Uncommon for the Afghan political landscape, these movements were driven by the sociopolitical activism of young Afghans.

[12] Y. A. Garbachev, *The Youth Movement in the Socialist-Oriented Countries*, trans. M. A. Labib (Kabul: Afghanistan Youth Democratic Organization, 1988).
[13] "People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed March 21, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Peoples-Democratic-Party-of-Afghanistan.
[14] Frank Clements, *Conflict in Afghanistan: An Encyclopedia: Roots of Modern Conflict*, illustrated ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003), 377.
[15] "PDPA History & Ideology: People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan," *Study.com*, accessed March 23, 2025, https://study.com/academy/lesson/pdpa-history-ideology-peoples-demoratic-party-afghanistan.html.

Primarily motivated by the government's perceived failure to protect citizens and grievances regarding real or perceived discrimination by the state, these protest movements have strongly criticized the ruling administration. Among the notable and enduring movements were The Farkhunda Movement (Junbesh-E Farkhunda), in 2015[16], Junbesh-e Tabasum (Tabassum movement) in 2015[17], Junbesh-e Roshanayi-e (Enlightenment movement) in 2016-17[18], and Junbesh-e Rashtakhiz-e Taghir (Uprising for Change) in 2017[19]. These movements exemplify how youth and civil society groups responded to the rapid deterioration of security conditions and alleged disparities in allocating foreign aid and national resources at the local level.

1. The Farkhunda Movement (Junbesh-E Farkhunda),2015

The Farkhunda Malakzada Movement emerged in 2015 following the brutal murder of Farkhunda Malakzada, a 27-year-old Afghan woman falsely accused of burning the Quran[20]. She was lynched by a mob in Kabul on March 19, 2015[21], sparking national and international outrage. Her killing became a symbol of gender-based violence, mob justice, and the failure of law enforcement in Afghanistan.

In response, Afghan youth, women's rights activists, and civil society groups organized protests, vigils, and advocacy campaigns demanding justice, legal reforms, and better protections for women[22]. The movement led to the arrest of several perpetrators, widespread condemnation of mob violence, and intensified discussions about women's rights, rule of law,

[16] Alissa J. Rubin, "Flawed Justice After a Mob Killed an Afghan Woman," *New York Times*, December 26, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/27/world/asia/flawed-justice-after-a-mob-killed-an-afghan-woman.html.

[17] Nazifa Alizada, "One Year After Tabassum: Afghan Women Search for a Voice," *The New Humanitarian* (Women & Girls), November 30, 2016, https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/womenandgirls/community/2016/11/30/one-year-tabassum-afghan-women-search-voice.

[18] The term "Enlightenment" does not fully represent Roshnayi-e. Roshnayi-e was popular in local discourse because the movement's agenda focused on the rerouting of an electricity transmission line, which in Dari/Persian brings light, or Roshnayi-e. Later, the name of the movement was translated into English as "Enlightenment" by some media outlets. Therefore, this term also uses in here.

[19] Ali Yawar Adili and Lenny Linke, "The Politics of Opposition: A Challenge to the National Unity Government?" *Afghanistan Analyst Network*, October 27, 2016, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-politics-of-opposition-a-challenge-to-the-national-unity-government/.

[20] Alissa J. Rubin, "Flawed Justice After a Mob Killed an Afghan Woman," *New York Times*, December 26, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/27/world/asia/flawed-justice-after-a-mob-killed-an-afghan-woman.html.

[21] "Family of Afghan Woman Lynched by Mob Demands Justice," *Al Jazeera*, April 2, 2015, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/4/2/family-of-afghan-woman-lynched-by-mob-demands-justice.

[22] Alissa J. Rubin, "Flawed Justice After a Mob Killed an Afghan Woman," *New York Times*, December 26, 2015

and social justice in Afghanistan[23]. It remains one of the most significant youth-driven movements advocating for gender equality and legal accountability in the country.

2. The Tabassum Movement (Junbesh-E Tabassum),2015

The Tabassum movement, also known as Junbesh-e Tabasum, originated from a protest rally in response to the brutal killing of seven Hazara civilians by insurgents in Zabul province in November 2015[24]. These killings were part of a series of kidnappings, mainly targeting Hazaras, along highways in various provinces throughout the year[25]. One of the victims was a nine-year-old girl named Shukria Tabassum, whose tragic death gave the movement its name.

After the victims' bodies were discovered in Zabul, young activists transported their coffins to Kabul and organized a protest outside the Presidential Palace on November 11, 2015. The demonstration, attended by several thousand protesters, included activists from diverse ethnic backgrounds, making it a significant platform for expressing collective national frustration regarding the deteriorating security situation across the country[26].

3. The Enlightenment Movement (Junbesh-E Roshnayi-E), 2016-2017

The Enlightenment movement, known as Junbesh-e Roshnayi-e, emerged in Afghanistan from 2016 to 2017 as a response to the Afghan government's decision to change the route of a significant power transmission line[27]. This transmission line, initially named TUTAP (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), after the countries involved, aimed to bring electricity from Turkmenistan through Hazara-dominated areas in Bamyan province before reaching Kabul and other regions in the south and east of the country[28]. However, tensions escalated within the National Unity Government (NUG) when

[23] "Family of Afghan Woman Lynched by Mob Demands Justice," *Al Jazeera*, April 2, 2015

[24] Ali M. Latifi, "Afghanistan's Hazara Community Demands Justice After Beheadings," *Al Jazeera*, November 11, 2015, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/11/afghanistans-hazara-community-demands-justice-after-beheadings.

[25] European Parliament, *Texts Adopted – Afghanistan, in Particular the Killings in the Province of Zabul* (Strasbourg: European Union, 2015), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0412_EN.html.

[26] Mujib Mashal, "Protest in Kabul for More Security after Seven Hostages Are Beheaded," *New York Times*, November 11, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/12/world/asia/afghanistan-protest-taliban-isis-hazara.html

[27] Savannah Hugueley and Department of Anthropology, Reed College, "The Enlightenment Movement: Electricity and Citizenship in Afghanistan," *Radicle: Reed Anthropology Review*, April 2019, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/235186132.pdf..

[28] Asian Development Bank, *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Power Sector Master Plan*, Technical Assistance Consultant's Report (Manila: Asian Development Bank, May 2013), https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/Power%20Sector%20Master%20Plan%20%28PSMP%29%20%28Final%20Report%29.pdf

the Ministry of Power and Energy, along with the state-owned electricity company Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, decided to reroute the transmission line through Salang Pass, citing cost-effectiveness as the primary factor behind this decision.

Members of the Roshnayi movement strongly protested against the rerouting, alleging that it was a deliberate act of discrimination by Pashtun leaders aimed at marginalizing the Hazara community and depriving them of the economic benefits associated with the development project. The movement organized several large gatherings, including a notable demonstration in Kabul on May 16, 2016. Tragically, on July 23, 2016, a demonstration was targeted by suicide bombers, resulting in the tragic loss of over eighty lives[29].

Frustrated by the lack of government response to their demands, the Roshnayi movement announced a new phase of "indefinite protest" scheduled to commence on September 27, 2016[30]. However, they also expressed their willingness to engage in negotiations with the government under the supervision of the United Nations. While striving for a peaceful resolution, they reiterated their commitment to civil resistance if the negotiations failed to yield satisfactory results.

4. The Uprising for Change Movement (Junbesh-E Rashtakhiz-E Taghir), 2017

The Uprising for Change, known as Junbesh-e Rashtakhiz-e Taghir, emerged in 2017 in response to a series of militant attacks that occurred in Kabul during June and July of that year[31]. The catalyst for the movement was the devastating truck bombing in Zanbaq Square on May 31, 2017, which claimed the lives of 150 individuals, making it one of the deadliest attacks in Kabul's history[32].

Following this tragedy, the Uprising for Change held its first major rally on June 2, 2017. Protesters marched toward the Presidential Palace, chanting "Khasta az marg ba soy-e arg" (tired of deaths and forward to the Arg). However, as the rally approached the palace, it was met with resistance from security forces, including the presidential guards known as the

[29] Srinjoy Bose et al., *Making Peace Possible: Youth Protest Movements in Afghanistan—Seeking Voice and Agency* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2019), accessed March 27, 2025, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/pw145-youth-protest-movements-in-afghanistan-seeking-voice-and-agency.pdf.
[30] Ibid
[31] Afghanistan Analysts Network, *"AAN Q&A: Tents and Bullets – The Crackdown on the Kabul Protests,"* Afghanistan Analysts Network - English, March 9, 2020, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/political-landscape/aan-qa-tents-and-bullets-the-crackdown-on-the-kabul-protests/.
[32] *Al Jazeera*, "Kabul Bombing: Huge Explosion Rocks Diplomatic District," May 31, 2017, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/5/31/kabul-bombing-huge-explosion-rocks-diplomatic-district.

President's Protective Service[33]. A confrontation ensued, leading to security forces opening fire on the demonstrators. Tragically, at least six protesters, including Salem Ezedyar, the son of Muhammad Alam Ezedyar, a prominent politician from the Jamiat-e Islami party, were killed in the incident. Muhammad Alam Ezedyar had previously served as the vice president of the Meshrano Jirga, the upper house of Parliament[34].

Leaders of the Uprising for Change criticized the Afghan government, accusing it of incompetence and failing to fulfill its responsibilities. The movement, which was predominantly Tajik, claimed that the National Unity Government (NUG) engaged in identity politics, resulting in the exclusion of movement members from government positions[35]. According to the Afghanistan Analysts Network, the movement expressed concerns about the ethnic-based division of power within the administration and government policies. They argued that the Tajik community, in particular, was not adequately represented in the government's leadership and decision-making processes. They rejected those who claimed to represent them in the NUG as "demagogic and vote-selling people.[36]" However, it is important to note that sentiments of marginalization and discrimination extended beyond the Tajik community, with other groups facing similar challenges of systemic and institutional discrimination.

The Uprising for Change aimed to bring attention to the grievances of marginalized communities and highlight the need for inclusive governance. It reflected a broader dissatisfaction with the government's performance and policies, particularly regarding issues of representation and equitable decision-making. While the movement was predominantly Tajik, it sought to address systemic inequalities faced by various communities across Afghanistan.

5. Democratic Process and Youth Movements (2010-2020)

The role of youth movements in Afghanistan's democratic process between 2010 and 2020 was significant, as youths played a crucial part in advocating for political reform, social change, and greater inclusivity. During this period, Afghanistan was undergoing a fragile democratic

[33] "Afghanistan Analysts Network, "AAN Q&A: Tents and Bullets – The Crackdown on the Kabul Protests," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, March 9, 2020.
[34] Ariana News, "Kabul Protest: Son of First Deputy Chairman of Senate Died of Wounds," *Ariana News* (blog), June 2, 2017, https://www.ariananews.af/kabul-protest-son-of-first-deputy-chairman-of-senate-died-of-wounds/.
[35] Tabish Forugh, "Afghanistan's Uprising for Change: Time to Shatter Ghani's Delusion," *The Diplomat*, June 27, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/afghanistans-uprising-for-change-time-to-shatter-ghanis-delusion/.
[36] United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Special Report: Attack on a Peaceful Demonstration in Kabul, 23 July 2016* (Kabul: UNAMA, 2016).

transition following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, and youth movements emerged as a dynamic force in shaping the country's political and social landscape. Below is an analysis of their role:

1. Youth Movements Advocacy for Democratic Values

Youth movements in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2020 actively promoted democratic values by encouraging political participation and demanding transparency. They organized voter registration drives, awareness campaigns, and public debates to foster a culture of democracy, particularly among youths. For example, the Afghanistan Youth National Movement (AYNM) emerged during this period, advocating for electoral reforms and greater youth representation in government[37]. These movements also pushed for accountability, using social media and public demonstrations to highlight corruption and demand fair governance. Their efforts were instrumental in increasing youth engagement in elections, such as the 2014 presidential election and the 2018 parliamentary polls, where young voters turned out in significant numbers[38].

2. Use of Technology and Social Media

The rise of internet access and mobile technology during this decade enabled Afghan youth to organize and mobilize more effectively. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube became essential tools for spreading awareness and organizing protests[39]. For instance, Youth-led initiatives like #IAmTheVote encouraged young Afghans to participate in elections and counter extremist narratives. These digital campaigns amplified their voices and connected Afghan youth with global movements, fostering a sense of solidarity and shared purpose.

3. Promotion of Human Rights and Gender Equality

Youth movements in Afghanistan played a critical role in advocating for human rights and gender equality during this period. Young women, in particular, were at the forefront of campaigns for women's empowerment and participation in politics. For example, the Afghan Women's Network (AWN), supported by young activists, worked to ensure women's

[37] Abdullah Athayi and Neelab Hakim, *The Dynamic of Youth Activism in Afghanistan: A Journey Between Hope and Desperation*, E-PAPER (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, June 2022), https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/importedFiles/2023/11/14/Youth_activism_Afghanistan_FINAL.pdf.
[38] Ibid
[39] Heinrich Böll Stiftung, "How Social Media Is Changing Afghan Society," February 7, 2018, https://www.boell.de/en/2018/02/07/you-are-what-you-share-how-social-media-changing-afghan-society.

representation in the 2019 peace talks[40]. Movements like #WhereIsMyName challenged societal norms by advocating for women's right to have their names publicly acknowledged, a significant step in a deeply patriarchal society[41]. These efforts not only highlighted the importance of gender equality but also pushed for broader human rights reforms, including freedom of speech and minority rights.

4. Challenges and Risks

Despite their efforts, youth activists faced significant challenges, including security threats, political marginalization, and socioeconomic barriers. Many young leaders were targeted by the Taliban and other insurgent groups for their outspoken views. For example, in 2020, young activist Abdul Samad Amiri was assassinated for his work promoting education and human rights[42]. Additionally, youth movements often struggled to gain meaningful representation in a political system dominated by older elites and warlords[43]. Economic barriers, such as high unemployment and limited access to education, further hindered their ability to engage fully in the democratic process.

5. Impact on the Democratic Process

Youth movements had a tangible impact on Afghanistan's democratic process during this period. They succeeded in mobilizing a generation of young Afghans eager to see their country move toward a more democratic and inclusive future[44]. For example, the Enlightening Movement (Jombesh-e-Roshangaran), led primarily by Hazara youth, advocated for social justice and equal rights for ethnic minorities[45]. Their efforts contributed to higher voter turnout among young people in elections and helped shift cultural attitudes, particularly in urban areas,

[40] *UN Women*, "No Peace Without Women: Afghan Activists on Why Women's Representation Matters," November 2, 2022, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2022/10/no-peace-without-women-afghan-activists-on-why-womens-representation-matters.
[41] Mahjooba Nowrouzi, "WhereIsMyName: Afghan Women Campaign for the Right to Reveal Their Names," *BBC News*, July 24, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53436335.
[42] Front Line Defenders, *Statement on the Killing of Abdul Samad Amiri in Afghanistan*, July 17, 2020, https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/statement-killing-abdul-samad-amiri-afghanistan..
[43] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Youth, Governance and Participation – Major Issues*, Fact Sheet (New York: United Nations, 2012), https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf.
[44] Abdullah Athayi and Neelab Hakim, *The Dynamic of Youth Activism in Afghanistan: A Journey Between Hope and Desperation*, E-Paper (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, June 2022), https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/importedFiles/2023/11/14/Youth_activism_Afghanistan_FINAL.pdf..
[45] *Al Jazeera*, "Devastating Blasts Rip Through Hazara Protest in Kabul," July 23, 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2016/7/23/devastating-blasts-rip-through-hazara-protest-in-kabul.

toward greater acceptance of democracy and human rights. These movements laid the groundwork for a more politically aware and engaged youth population.

6. Limitations and Setbacks

Despite their significant contributions, youth movements faced limitations due to structural barriers such as weak institutions, corruption, and ongoing conflict. The Taliban's resurgence in 2021 marked a major setback for the democratic gains made during this period[46]. Many activists, including members of the Afghanistan Youth National Movement and the Enlightening Movement, were forced to flee the country or go into hiding[47]. The collapse of the democratic government in 2021 underscored the fragility of Afghanistan's political system and the challenges youth movements face in sustaining their progress.

Between 2010 and 2020, youth movements in Afghanistan played a vital role in promoting democratic values, human rights, and social change. Movements like the Afghanistan Youth National Movement**,** #WhereIsMyName, and the Enlightening Movement demonstrated the power of youth activism in challenging corruption, advocating for gender equality, and fostering political engagement. Despite facing immense challenges, including security threats and political marginalization, these movements left a lasting legacy. While the Taliban's return to power in 2021 disrupted their progress, the efforts of Afghan youth during this decade remain a testament to their resilience and commitment to building a more democratic and inclusive society.

6. Statement of the Problem

Afghanistan's youth population, which forms a significant majority of its demographic composition, remains underutilized and marginalized in its political and democratic processes. Despite the democratic transition initiated post-2001 and the enactment of the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (ANYP) in 2014, structural challenges persist, including systemic corruption, ethnic divisions, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Youth movements have sporadically emerged as critical agents of change, yet their potential remains largely untapped due to political instability, socio-economic hardships, and lack of opportunities for effective participation in governance. For instance, the Tabasum Movement (2015) mobilized

[46] Lindsay Maizland, *The Taliban in Afghanistan* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, January 19, 2023), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan.
[47] Ibid

thousands against government inaction on security, while the Enlightenment Movement (2016) protested unequal development policies. These movements reflect Afghan youths' growing frustration with systemic failures and their willingness to challenge governance structures.

This study seeks to explore the role of Afghan youth movements between 2010 and 2020, analyzing their contributions, challenges, and impact on the democratic process. By examining the interplay between youth activism and Afghanistan's political landscape, the research aims to identify barriers to effective youth engagement and propose actionable insights for fostering participation in the country's democratic transformation.

7. Review of Literature

1. Ethnic Politics and Institutional Frameworks

Suven Gunnar Simonsen's (2004) work titled *Ethicizing Afghanistan? Inclusion and Exclusion in Post-Bonn Institution Building* analyzes how ethnicity became entrenched in Afghan politics during the years of conflict. The study highlights the implications of constructing political institutions, such as governance frameworks and electoral systems, to reduce ethnic tensions. While Simonsen's findings precede the focus period, they are foundational for understanding persistent issues of ethnic exclusion that affect youth mobilization and democratic engagement in Afghanistan[48].

M. Qasim Wafayezada's (2015) study, *Ethnic Politics and Youth Political Participation in Afghanistan,* directly addresses the challenges faced by Afghan youth in the political realm. He identifies ethnic divisions and systemic barriers, such as ethnic political parties and an exclusive electoral system, as key factors hindering youth participation. This study offers critical insights into the limited agency of youth within political structures shaped by ethnic stratification[49].

2. Challenges of Democratic Development

Anna Larson's contributions (2009, 2011) are instrumental in understanding the role of political parties in Afghanistan's democratization. Her 2009 study, *Afghanistan's New*

[48] Sven Gunnar Simonsen, "Ethnicising Afghanistan?: Inclusion and Exclusion in Post-Bonn Institution Building," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2004): 707-29, file:///C:/Users/Admiin/Downloads/Ethnicising_Afghanistan_Inclusion_and_Ex.pdf

[49] M. Qasim Wafayezada, *Ethnic Politics and Youth Political Participation in Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghanistan Peace Initiatives & Heinrich Böll Stiftung, September 2015), https://afpak.boell.org/sites/default/files/importedFiles/2021/08/05/https___af.boell.org_sites_default_files_151105_policy_paper_english-final.pdf.

Democratic Parties: A Means to Organize Democratization? outlines external and internal constraints hindering the development of democratic parties. These include the absence of historical political traditions, weak institutional support, and financial limitations[50]. Larson's 2011 analysis, *Political Parties in Afghanistan: A Review of the State of Political Parties After the 2009 and 2010 Elections,* further elaborates on the institutional weaknesses that prevent political parties from fostering meaningful youth involvement[51].

Douglas Saltmarshe and Abhilash Medhi's (2011) study, *Local Governance in Afghanistan: A View from the Ground*, explores the progress and challenges of local governance structures. Their findings reveal gaps in administrative capacity and representation, which disproportionately affect rural youth. These challenges have significant implications for youth-led movements, as local governance structures are often the first point of political engagement for young people[52].

Enayatulla Adel's (2015) research, *Promoting Democracy in Afghanistan*, examines international efforts to support democracy through top-down and bottom-up strategies. His findings underscore the alignment and misalignment of U.S. and EU approaches with Afghan realities, highlighting the limited success of such initiatives in fostering genuine youth participation[53].

3. Youth Engagement in Democratic Processes

Shamshad Pasarlay's (2016) dissertation, *Making the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan: A History and Analysis Through the Lens of Coordination and Deferral Theory*, provides a theoretical framework for understanding constitutional development in Afghanistan. Pasarlay's analysis reveals that unresolved constitutional issues, including power-sharing and ethnic

[50] Anna Larson, *Afghanistan's New Democratic Parties: A Means to Organise Democratisation?* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, March 2009), https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1163275/470_1237887605_areu-political-parties-paper-1-bp-2009-final-web.pdf.

[51] Anna Larson, *Political Parties in Afghanistan: A Review of the State of Political Parties after the 2009 and 2010 Elections* (Washington, DC: National Democratic Institute, June 2011), https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan-political-parties-july-2011.pdf.

[52] Douglas Saltmarshe and Abhilash Medhi, *Local Governance in Afghanistan: A View from the Ground* (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, June 2011), https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/areu/2011/en/78996.

[53] Enayatulla Adel, *Promoting Democracy in Afghanistan: The Top-Down or Bottom-Up Approaches of European Union and United States* (Bachelor's thesis, Södertörn University, 2015), https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:941317/FULLTEXT01.pdf

representation, have a direct impact on youth's ability to engage with and influence democratic processes[54].

Timor Sharan and Srinjoy Bose's (2016) article, *Political Networks and the 2014 Afghan Presidential Election: Power Restructuring, Ethnicity, and State Stability*, sheds light on the intersection of political networks and democratic processes. Their analysis of the 2014 presidential election demonstrates how entrenched political elites manipulate power dynamics, often sidelining youth voices in key decision-making processes. This systemic exclusion undermines the potential of youth movements to contribute to political stability and reform[55].

Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan's (2020) study, *Political Participation of Afghan Youths on Facebook: A Case Study of Northeastern Afghanistan,* examines the role of digital platforms in facilitating youth engagement. Despite the growing presence of youth on social media, Orfan's findings reveal that their political activities are largely low-risk and symbolic. The study underscores the need for more substantive avenues of youth participation beyond digital engagement[56].

4. Hybrid Democracy and Youth Mobilization

Aureo Gomes' (2018) work, *Hybrid Democracy: Electoral Rules and Political Competition in Afghanistan,* analyzes the interplay between formal institutions and informal practices in Afghanistan's democratization. Gomes highlights how systemic corruption and weak political parties create barriers for meaningful youth participation. These findings are critical for understanding why youth movements struggle to gain traction within Afghanistan's hybrid democratic framework[57].

Mussarat Jabeen and Usman Shauket's (2019) study, *Democratization of Afghanistan and the Karzai Regime,* critiques the imposition of Western democratic models on Afghanistan. Their analysis reveals how a lack of alignment with Afghan cultural and social realities undermined

[54] Shamshad Pasarlay, *Making the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan: A History and Analysis Through the Lens of Coordination and Deferral Theory* (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2016), https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/38077.

[55] Timor Sharan and Srinjoy Bose, "Political Networks and the 2014 Afghan Presidential Election: Power Restructuring, Ethnicity and State Stability," *Conflict, Security & Development* 16, no. 6 (2016): 613-33, https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2016.1248431.

[56] Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan, "Political Participation of Afghan Youths on Facebook: A Case Study of Youths in Kabul," *Cogent Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1-21, https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1857916..

[57] Aureo Gomes, "Hybrid Democracy: Electoral Rules and Political Competition in Afghanistan," *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 61, no. 1 (2018): 1-20, https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329201800107..

the effectiveness of democratization efforts, further marginalizing youth aspirations within the political landscape[58].

5. Youth Activism and Socio-economic Challenges

Abdullah Athayi and Neelab Hakim's (2022) article, *The Dynamic of Youth Activism in Afghanistan: A Journey Between Hope and Desperation,* reflects on the resilience of Afghan youth under evolving political circumstances. The study highlights the socioeconomic and political contributions of youth over the past two decades, while also acknowledging the challenges posed by insecurity, unemployment, and limited educational opportunities[59].

Sanjay Kumar's (2014) analysis, *Indian Youth and Electoral Politics,* provides a comparative perspective on youth political engagement. Kumar's emphasis on the demographic factors influencing political participation is particularly relevant to Afghanistan, where regional disparities and structural inequities significantly shape youth movements[60].

The reviewed literature comprehensively explains the dynamics shaping youth movements and democratic processes in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2020. Persistent ethnic divisions, weak institutional frameworks, and systemic exclusion of youth have limited their potential as agents of democratic change. However, the resilience and adaptability of Afghan youth, as highlighted in several studies, offer hope for their continued contribution to the nation's democratic evolution.

8. Research Gap

Despite the formal adoption of democratic structures in Afghanistan following the 2001 constitution, a significant gap persists between the institutional framework of democracy and the actual political participation of youth. Afghan youth, who comprise the majority of the population, remain largely excluded from meaningful roles in governance, policy-making, and formal power structures. While youth are frequently mobilized during election campaigns, they are often side-lined in post-election political processes. This disconnects between democratic

[58] Mussarat Jabeen and Usman Shauket, "Democratization of Afghanistan and Karzai Regime" (paper presented at the International Conference on Democracy, Governance and Security, Lahore, January 2019), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343601328_Democratization_of_Afghanistan_and_Karzai_Regime.
[59] Abdullah Athayi and Neelab Hakim, *The Dynamic of Youth Activism in Afghanistan: A Journey Between Hope and Desperation* (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, November 2023), https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/importedFiles/2023/11/14/Youth_activism_Afghanistan_FINAL.pdf.
[60] Sanjay Kumar, *Indian Youth and Electoral Politics: An Emerging Engagement* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2014).

ideals and youth inclusion represents a critical, underexplored dimension of Afghanistan's democratic transition.

Furthermore, existing literature on Afghanistan's political landscape has largely centered on conflict dynamics, state-building, elite politics, and ethnic divisions. However, the emergence of youth-led movements between 2010 and 2020—such as the Justice for Farkhunda Movement, the Tabassum Movement, the Enlightenment Movement, and the Uprising for Change Movement—has not received sufficient scholarly attention. These grassroots mobilizations reflect a rising political consciousness among Afghan youth and their potential to influence democratic discourse. This study addresses the lack of academic engagement with youth-driven activism in Afghanistan and explores how these movements have challenged state authority and advocated for justice, equity, and democratic reform in a fragile post-conflict setting.

9. Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To trace the emergence of the youth movement in Afghanistan.
2. Examining the factors responsible for youth movements in Afghanistan from 2010-2020.
3. To take stock of the Major Concerns of the Youth Movement in Afghanistan
4. Analyzing the Role of Youth Movements in Afghanistan's Political System.
5. Examining the relationship between the youth movement and the democratic process in Afghanistan.

10.Hypothesis

1. The youth in Afghanistan are deeply fragmented and pursue diverse goals.
2. The youth subscribe to a set of norms but believe that the political system in Afghanistan is not adequately responsive to them.
3. The youth movement in Afghanistan is geared towards the reinforcement of democracy and equality.
4. The youth drawn from disadvantaged, marginalized, and oppressed sections have been at the forefront of this movement.

11.Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the theoretical framework of democratic participation as articulated by Robert A. Dahl, whose work emphasizes the principles of political equality, inclusiveness, and the responsiveness of institutions to citizen demands. Dahl's concept of polyarchy—a system where multiple groups participate in governance—provides a useful lens for analysing the role of youth in Afghanistan's democratic processes between 2010 and 2020. The framework helps assess the extent to which Afghan youth have exercised their political agency, influenced decision-making, and engaged in formal and informal governance mechanisms. By applying Dahl's model, this research critically explores the structural and institutional barriers that limit youth participation and the potential for youth-led movements to contribute to democratic consolidation in a post-conflict society.

In addition to Dahl's democratic participation framework, this study also draws on Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), developed by McCarthy and Zald (1970s), which explains social movements not only as reactions to grievances but as outcomes of the ability to acquire, organize, and deploy resources. RMT highlights the importance of material resources (funding, media access), human resources (leadership, skills, networks), and organizational structures (formal and informal groups) in sustaining movements and shaping their effectiveness. Applying this perspective allows the study to move beyond the question of *why* Afghan youth mobilized to also examine *how* these movements were organized, what resources they relied upon, and why some achieved visibility and influence while others declined.

The integration of Dahl's concept of polyarchy with RMT provides a comprehensive analytical framework: while Dahl emphasizes the normative and institutional dimensions of inclusiveness in democratic governance, RMT underscores the practical mechanisms through which youth movements mobilize and sustain collective action. Together, these frameworks enable a nuanced analysis of Afghan youth movements between 2010 and 2020, capturing both the structural barriers to participation and the organizational dynamics that determined their impact on the country's democratic trajectory.

12. Scope of the Research

This study investigates the role of youth movements in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2020, analysing their contributions to democratic processes during a period of profound socio-political transformation. Following the U.S.-led intervention in 2001, Afghanistan embarked

on a complex democratic experiment, within which youth activism emerged as a significant force for change. The research examines how these movements sought to influence governance, policy-making, and public discourse while simultaneously grappling with systemic challenges, including corruption, ethnic divisions, gender inequality, and economic hardships. By focusing on this critical decade, marked by both democratic aspirations and persistent instability, the study provides a nuanced understanding of youth participation in Afghanistan's political evolution.

The analysis is structured around several key dimensions. First, it explores prominent youth movements, assessing their objectives, strategies, and tangible impacts on democratic reforms. Second, it investigates the structural barriers that constrained youth participation, particularly their marginalization from formal decision-making processes. Third, the study evaluates policy frameworks such as the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (2014), scrutinizing their effectiveness in addressing youth needs and fostering civic engagement. Additionally, the Research considers socio-demographic factors, including ethnicity, gender, and urban-rural divides that shaped the nature and outcomes of youth activism.

To deepen this analysis, the study situates contemporary youth movements within Afghanistan's broader historical and political context. It examines how the country's unique political culture, combined with international influences and global democratic norms, influenced the trajectory of youth activism. By concentrating on the 2010–2020 period—a time of heightened youth mobilization amid political transitions—the research offers focused insights into the opportunities and limitations faced by young Afghans in their pursuit of democratic change. Ultimately, this study aims to illuminate the complex interplay between youth activism and democratic development in Afghanistan, providing a foundation for understanding their potential to drive sustainable reform in challenging environments.

13.Limitations of the Research

1. **Dependence on Secondary Data:** Due to the current political situation in Afghanistan, it was not feasible for the researcher to return to the country to collect primary data. The inability to conduct in-person fieldwork significantly limited the study's access to firsthand perspectives. Instead, the research relies heavily on secondary data sources, including published reports, academic studies, and media coverage.

2. **Safety Concerns for Data Collection:** Developing and distributing a questionnaire for primary data collection through local contacts was deemed unsafe, as it could endanger individuals assisting with the data collection process. The volatile political and security environment made such endeavors unviable.
3. **Language Barriers in Online Surveys:** While online surveys were considered as an alternative for primary data collection, the researcher faced language barriers. Many individuals in Afghanistan are not proficient in English, and translating the questionnaire into local languages such as Pashto or Dari posed challenges in ensuring clarity and consistency of the questions.
4. **Limited Contextual Understanding:** Without direct engagement with participants, the study could not incorporate the nuanced, real-time experiences of Afghan youth activists. This limits the ability to provide a comprehensive analysis of their perspectives and lived realities.
5. **Generalizability of Findings:** The reliance on secondary data and the lack of direct input from diverse youth groups in Afghanistan mean the findings are based on existing narratives and analyses, which may not fully capture the current dynamics or reflect the diversity of experiences.

These limitations underscore the challenges faced in conducting research in politically unstable and logistically constrained environments, emphasizing the need for caution, ethical considerations, and adaptability in pursuing academic inquiry.

14.Justification of the Study

The importance of this study stems from the pivotal role that youth play in the development and democratization of Afghanistan. As the majority demographic group, Afghan youth have the potential to act as a transformative force in addressing the nation's persistent challenges. However, their marginalization from political, economic, and social spheres limits this potential. Youth participation is further complicated by ethnic divisions and gender disparities**.** Many youths' movements struggle to form cross-ethnic alliances due to deeply entrenched political and social divisions. Additionally, young women face additional barriers**,** as their participation in political activism is often met with resistance, limiting their visibility and

influence. A comprehensive analysis of their involvement in democratic processes is crucial to understanding how their energies and aspirations can be harnessed for national development.

This research is also significant because it highlights the gaps in policies and practices that fail to include youth in governance and decision-making effectively. By focusing on systemic barriers and youth engagement opportunities, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamics that shape their participation. The Afghan government's adoption of the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (2014) was an attempt to institutionalize youth participation in governance[61]. However, as this study reveals, its implementation has been hindered by political instability, corruption, and a lack of meaningful youth representation in decision-making. The Justice for Farkhunda Movement (2015) demonstrated youth mobilization against gender-based violence and judicial corruption, pressuring authorities to reform legal processes[62]. Similarly, the Uprising for Change Movement (2017) showcased youth activism demanding that the government answer for the insecure measures, especially for the Zanbaq Square car bomb blast[63]. The findings could inform policymakers, development practitioners, and international organizations aiming to design targeted interventions that address youth-specific needs, fostering greater inclusion and empowerment.

Furthermore, the study's focus on the years 2010 to 2020 provides a relevant and timely perspective on how democratic practices in Afghanistan have evolved during a decade of significant political and social change. Understanding the role of youth during this period could offer valuable lessons for future democratic transitions and policy development in Afghanistan and similar post-conflict societies.

15.Contribution of the Proposed Research to Existing Knowledge

The proposed study, *Youth Movements and Democratic Processes in Afghanistan: An Analytical Study from 2010 to 2020,* contributes to existing knowledge by examining the intersection of youth participation and democratic practices during a critical decade in

[61] Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Information and Culture, Office of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs, *Afghanistan National Youth Policy* (Kabul: Government of Afghanistan, 2014), https://adsp.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/PS-17_AFGHANISTAN-NATIONAL-YOUTH-POLICY.pdf.
[62] U.S. Department of State, *2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, April 13, 2016), https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/usdos/2016/en/109701.
[63] Srinjoy Bose, Nematullah Bizhan, and Niamatullah Ibrahimi, *Youth Protest Movements in Afghanistan: Seeking Voice and Agency*, Peaceworks no. 145 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2019), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345314662_Youth_Protest_Movements_in_Afghanistan_Seeking_Voice_and_Agency.

Afghanistan's political evolution. While previous research has explored aspects of Afghanistan's democratization, this study uniquely focuses on the role of Afghan youth, who constitute over 63%[64] of the population, as agents of democratic change.

The research highlights the systemic barriers, such as corruption, unemployment, and gender inequality, that limit youth engagement in governance and decision-making processes. It provides a decadal perspective, capturing how youth movements and democratic practices evolved between 2010 and 2020. By focusing on both challenges and opportunities, the study offers actionable insights for policymakers and development practitioners aiming to foster inclusivity and resilience in Afghanistan's democratic framework.

Furthermore, the research underscores the transformative potential of Afghan youth in a post-conflict society, contributing to global discourses on democratization in fragile states. Its emphasis on gender dynamics and marginalized groups ensures a nuanced understanding of youth participation, filling gaps in existing literature and offering a foundation for comparative analyses in similar contexts.

16. Methodology

1. Delineation of Methodology Adopted

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, focusing exclusively on secondary data analysis. The research aims to examine youth movements and democratic processes in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2020. By adopting an analytical approach, the study seeks to uncover patterns, trends, and implications within the available literature, reports, and historical documents. The methodology aligns with the research objectives by providing a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between youth engagement and democratization in Afghanistan's unique socio-political context.

2. Nature/Sources of Secondary Data

Secondary Data: The study relies on a diverse range of secondary sources, including:

1. Peer-reviewed academic articles and books focusing on Afghan youth, democratization, and political processes.

[64] *UNFPA Asia Pacific*, "UNFPA Calls on the Global Community to Stand With Women and Youth in Afghanistan," accessed March 18, 2025, https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/news/unfpa-calls-global-community-stand-women-and-youth-afghanistan.

2. Government documents, such as the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (2014), to provide official perspectives and policy frameworks.
3. Reports from international organizations (e.g., UNFPA, UNESCO, and the World Bank) addressing youth development and democracy in Afghanistan.
4. Analytical studies and historical records to contextualize the findings.
5. Data from reputable online sources and institutional archives to ensure comprehensive coverage.

3. Selection and Validation of Sources

The selection of secondary sources was guided by relevance, credibility, and alignment with the research objectives. Sources were evaluated based on:

1. **Relevance:** Materials directly addressing youth movements, democratization, or political participation in Afghanistan.
2. **Credibility:** Preference was given to peer-reviewed journals, official publications, and reports from established organizations.
3. **Timeliness:** Emphasis on literature published within the focus period (2010-2020), ensuring contemporary relevance.
4. **Contextual Value:** Inclusion of historical documents, where necessary to provide background and continuity.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach based on secondary data sources to examine the role of youth movements in Afghanistan's democratic processes from 2010 to 2020. Given the constraints of primary data collection, it relies on existing literature, government reports, policy documents, and scholarly articles to identify key factors influencing youth activism and democratic engagement.

A descriptive analysis presents a detailed account of Afghan youth movements, their historical development, and their role in governance. This includes major youth-led protests such as the Farkhunda Movement (2015), the Tabasum Movement (2015), the Enlightenment Movement (2016), and the Uprising for Change (2017). Additionally, the study highlights socio-political barriers like unemployment, lack of education, ethnic divisions, and gender disparities that hinder youth participation.

Beyond description, the study applies an analytical approach to assess how government policies, repression, elite control, and international interventions have influenced youth movements. For instance, it evaluates the effectiveness of the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (ANYP) (2014) in fostering youth inclusion. By integrating qualitative insights, the research provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges young activists face.

A comparative historical analysis is also employed to trace the evolution of Afghan youth movements over time. It compares activism under King Amanullah Khan's modernization efforts to contemporary digital movements post-2001, contrasting traditional protests with modern social media-driven activism. This historical perspective sheds light on shifting patterns of youth engagement.

17. Chapterization

The present research was a modest attempt to outline youth movements in Afghanistan and their role in the democratic process from 2010 to 2020. This was presented through the following chapters:

Chapter 1 – Introduction: This introductory chapter provides an overview of Afghanistan, including its population, the situation of youth in the country, and the procedures followed to complete the subsequent chapters. It set the foundation for understanding the broader context of the study.

Chapter 2 - History and Implications of Youth Movements in Afghanistan: This chapter outlined the history of youth movements in Afghanistan and their implications. It examined how youth movements began, their organizational structures, and their influence on Afghan society. The chapter also analyzed the socio-political context that shaped these movements.

Chapter 3 - Youth Movements and Political Changes: This chapter discusses how youth movements attempted to bring about political change in Afghanistan. It explored their impact on leadership and governance and analyzed the major challenges that these movements faced in achieving their objectives.

Chapter 4 - Youth Movements and Democratic Processes: This chapter examined the role of youth movements in efforts to establish democracy and promote democratization in Afghanistan. It focused on key themes such as representation, decentralization of power, and the challenges of fostering a democratic culture.

Chapter 5 - Major Concerns of Youth Movements: This chapter provided an analysis of the primary concerns of youth movements in Afghanistan, including issues such as freedom, employment, opportunities, gender equality, and political participation. It explored how youth engaged in decision-making processes and identified who represented their interests in the political landscape.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion: This concluding chapter brought together the findings of the research in a logical and coherent manner. It highlighted the major contributions of the study to the understanding of youth movements and their influence on Afghanistan's democratic processes, offering insights and recommendations for future research and policy.

18. Integrated Analysis of Chapters' Findings and Their Relevance to Afghan Youth Movements

Chapter 1: Introduction to Youth Movements and Democratic Processes in Afghanistan

This chapter provides foundational insight into the youth landscape within Afghanistan, contextualizing the demographic significance of young people, who comprise over 63% of the population[65]. The chapter emphasizes how this substantial youth population faces limited economic opportunities, social challenges, and systemic obstacles, setting the stage for the need for youth-led change. Recognizing this demographic as both an opportunity and a challenge, the chapter introduces youth movements' critical role in advocating for democratic reform, social equity, and improved governance structures. This background frames the research objectives of examining the factors driving Afghan youth movements, their impact on political structures, and their unique challenges and contributions to Afghanistan's democratic processes.

The major findings of this chapter are:

1. **Youth Demographics as a Double-Edged Sword**: Afghanistan's youthful demographic is not only a potential opportunity for economic growth but also a latent threat if unmet needs for education and employment persist, contributing to social unrest and migration patterns.

[65] *UNFPA Afghanistan*, "Young People Make Their Voices Heard Through the Afghan Youth Parliament," accessed March 18, 2025, https://afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/news/young-people-make-their-voices-heard-through-afghan-youth-parliament.

2. **Cultural and Ethnic Fluidity**: Unlike other nations, Afghan youth often balance multiple identities—tribal, ethnic, and national—simultaneously, which influences their participation in politics and activism.
3. **Political Legacy of Isolation**: Afghanistan's historical isolation from colonial rule and external governance has created a unique political psyche among youth, who value autonomy but struggle with centralized political structures.

Chapter 2: History and Implications of Youth Movements in Afghanistan

The historical context of youth movements in Afghanistan highlights how Afghan youth have consistently been at the forefront of societal reform and resistance, spanning from early anti-colonial struggles to contemporary movements for democratic rights. Figures like Syed Jamaluddin Afghani and activists during King Amanullah Khan's reign established a legacy of youth-led reform focused on modernization and democratic principles. These early movements laid the groundwork for future activism by emphasizing unity, education, and liberation from oppression. This chapter demonstrates that the historical trajectory of youth movements reflects a persistent commitment to justice and progress, setting a cultural precedent for modern youth activism.

Its major findings are:

1. **Community-Centric Origins**: Afghan youth movements often begin in localized community settings (e.g., village councils or mosques), bypassing traditional political institutions and formal organizational hierarchies.
2. **Influence of Religion**: The intertwining of religious narratives with youth activism provides a moral framework that simultaneously empowers movements and limits their secular appeal, creating a unique dynamic in Afghanistan.
3. **Resistance Identity**: Afghan youth movements derive their resilience from a collective identity built around resistance to external powers, from Soviet influence to Western democratization efforts, making their trajectory unique compared to global movements.
4. **Role of Migration**: The experiences of Afghan youth who migrate and return often act as catalysts for change, importing global ideas of activism while adapting them to local realities.

Chapter 3: Youth Movements and Political Changes

This chapter examines the influence of youth movements on Afghanistan's political landscape, particularly in the context of post-2001 political reforms. Afghan youth played pivotal roles in raising awareness around issues like government accountability, electoral transparency, and anti-corruption measures. Key movements, including the Enlightenment Movement and the Tabasum Movement, exemplify youth resilience against political marginalization and illustrate the youth's demand for equal representation across ethnic and socioeconomic lines. The Findings suggest that while youth movements have catalyzed political engagement, deeply rooted power dynamics and elite resistance have limited their transformative impact.

The major findings from this chapter are:

1. **Electoral Activism Fatigue**: Afghan youth experience "activism fatigue" during non-election periods due to a lack of institutional support and the monopolization of power by elite groups.
2. **Proxy Participation**: Many youths are drawn into political processes not as independent actors but as proxies for tribal or familial interests, limiting the transformative potential of their participation.
3. **Symbolic Representation**: Youth are often used as symbolic figures during electoral campaigns but are excluded from substantive governance roles post-election, undermining trust in political systems.
4. **Fragmentation of Alliances**: Efforts to create youth coalitions across ethnic and regional lines often collapse under the weight of entrenched divisions, highlighting the challenges of unity in a diverse society.

Chapter 4: Youth Movements and the Democratic Process in Afghanistan (2010-2020)

Afghan youth engagement in democratic processes from 2010 to 2020 demonstrates a unique intersection between activism, digital mobilization, and civic participation. This chapter highlights how youth-led movements during elections have promoted democratic values, transparency, and accountability. While these movements mobilized considerable support, they faced challenges from systemic corruption and inadequate institutional reforms. Afghan youth demonstrated adaptability by using social media platforms to overcome geographic and ethnic divides, emphasizing the need for digital literacy and access as tools for sustained democratic engagement.

The major findings of this chapter are:

1. **Digital Activism as a Double-Edged Sword**: While social media has democratized access to activism, it has also created echo chambers, where youth engage with like-minded groups without challenging broader systemic issues.
2. **Disconnect Between Policy and Practice**: Policies like the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (2014) reflect an aspirational vision for youth inclusion but fail to resonate with grassroots realities, creating a disconnect between governance and activism.
3. **Decentralization Challenges**: Efforts to decentralize power in Afghanistan have inadvertently weakened youth participation by dispersing decision-making authority into local systems dominated by tribal and elite networks.
4. **Democracy Without Democratic Culture**: Afghan youth movements highlight the paradox of pursuing democratic reforms in a society that lacks a deeply rooted democratic culture, emphasizing the need for educational and cultural groundwork.

Chapter 5: Major Concerns of Youth Movements

The fifth chapter focuses on the main challenges that Afghan youth movements face, which include limited opportunities for political participation, high unemployment, educational disparities, and persistent gender inequality. Afghan youth represent a significant demographic, with over 63% of the population under the age of 25[66]Their engagement in governance is often restricted by entrenched power structures and ethnic divisions. The Afghanistan National Youth Policy (ANYP), introduced in 2014, aimed to address these issues but has faced barriers in implementation, revealing gaps in resource allocation and political support. The chapter underlines the importance of addressing these disparities to harness the potential of Afghan youth as agents of societal change.

Its major findings are:

1. **Intergenerational Mistrust**: Afghan youth movements face significant challenges from intergenerational mistrust, where older generations view youth activism as destabilizing rather than reformative.
2. **Economic Justice Over Ideological Change**: Unlike many global youth movements focused on ideological reform, Afghan youth prioritize issues like equitable economic access and job creation, often sidelining broader political goals.

[66] Ibid

3. **Rural-Urban Divide in Concerns**: Rural youth emphasize basic needs like education access and healthcare, while urban youth focus on political representation and digital activism, creating a dual narrative within movements.
4. **Post-Conflict Trauma**: The psychological scars from decades of conflict significantly shape the priorities of youth movements, with many focusing on healing and community rebuilding as precursors to political engagement.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The final chapter synthesizes the findings, emphasizing the critical role of Afghan youth in advocating for democratic principles and challenging systemic barriers. It concludes that although Afghan youth have made substantial contributions to the democratic landscape, achieving long-term reforms requires structural changes in education, economic development, and political inclusion. The resilience and adaptability displayed by Afghan youth indicate the potential for future democratic progress, provided their activism is met with genuine institutional support. This chapter stresses that without systemic reforms, the sustainability of youth-led democratic movements may remain limited.

The main findings of this research are:

1. **Generational Divide in Political Trust**: Younger Afghans are increasingly skeptical of traditional political institutions, creating a generational divide that threatens the long-term legitimacy of governance structures.
2. **Potential for Transformative Leadership**: Afghan youth exhibit leadership potential rooted in a unique blend of traditional values and modern aspirations, offering a bridge between conservative and progressive forces in society.
3. **Institutional Exclusion as a Catalyst**: The consistent exclusion of youth from formal power structures has fueled innovative approaches to activism, such as grassroots organizing and cross-border advocacy.
4. **Hope Amidst Despair**: Despite systemic challenges, Afghan youth movements are characterized by an enduring sense of hope and a belief in their ability to influence societal change, distinguishing them from more cynical global movements.

19. Examining the Outcomes of Afghan Youth Movements

Afghan youth movements over the past two decades have navigated both successes and challenges, with their impact observed across political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. While their efforts have introduced meaningful dialogue around reform, the extent of tangible change varies by sector.

1. **Political Outcomes**: Politically, Afghan youth movements have been pivotal in advocating for transparency, anti-corruption measures, and greater inclusivity in governance. Their involvement in significant national events, like the 2014 and 2018 elections, reflects a growing generational commitment to democratic processes. Despite these efforts, the existing power dynamics—often centralized and resistant to reform—have limited the structural influence of these movements, relegating their role in governance to raising awareness rather than implementing policy changes. Thus, although youth movements have highlighted the need for accountability, achieving substantive political reform remains challenging due to entrenched interests.
2. **Economic Outcomes**: Economic issues have been central to youth-led advocacy, as young Afghans contend with high unemployment rates, limited access to quality education, and inadequate vocational opportunities. Youth movements have sought to draw attention to the need for an economic infrastructure that better supports Afghanistan's young population. However, systemic challenges, such as reliance on foreign aid and insufficient local resources, continue to hinder sustainable economic reform. While these movements have succeeded in making economic inequities a part of the national conversation, their direct impact on policy has been limited, underscoring the need for broader economic restructuring to address youth unemployment and financial security.
3. **Social Outcomes**: Socially, Afghan youth movements have made substantial strides in advocating for gender equity, social justice, and inclusivity. Notable campaigns, including those surrounding the Farkhunda tragedy, have brought awareness to issues of gender-based violence and the importance of justice reform, particularly for women and marginalized groups. These movements have successfully initiated discussions on gender equality and human rights, especially in urban areas, fostering a gradual shift in social attitudes. However, conservative societal structures continue to limit these impacts, particularly in rural regions, indicating that sustained activism and policy support are essential for translating these social shifts into broader societal change.

4. **Cultural Outcomes:** Culturally, youth movements have facilitated an evolving sense of Afghan identity, one that emphasizes unity, tolerance, and openness to global perspectives. Through digital platforms, young activists have connected with broader international dialogues, fostering a more progressive outlook among Afghan youth. This shift has encouraged cross-ethnic collaboration and helped challenge traditional views, gradually promoting inclusivity and acceptance. Nonetheless, cultural resistance remains strong, with conservative norms still prevalent, especially outside urban centers. Youth-led movements thus continue to advocate for cultural openness, signaling an ongoing transformation that seeks to balance tradition with democratic values.

In sum, Afghan youth movements have opened pathways for change across these domains, yet their capacity to achieve lasting impact is closely tied to systemic reforms and ongoing institutional support. Without such foundational changes, the potential of youth-led movements to enact sustainable progress will remain constrained.

20. Findings

This research illuminates the complex and evolving role of Afghan youth in shaping the democratic process from 2010 to 2020. Amid deeply rooted political structures and longstanding exclusion, Afghan youth have demonstrated resilience and agency, forging movements that push for social justice, democratic reform, and modernization. Grounded in a history of activism, these youth-led efforts have become vocal advocates for transparency, inclusivity, and accountability, despite constraints imposed by entrenched political interests and international agendas that often prioritize stability over reform. The findings reveal that corruption, socioeconomic barriers, and ethnic divides continue to impede youth participation in governance. Nevertheless, Afghan youth persist, employing both traditional and digital activism to drive change, positioning themselves as central agents of democratic potential in Afghanistan's multifaceted political landscape. The following are the key findings from this study.

- First, the Afghan youth movements drew strength from a history of activism advocating unity, modernization, and social justice. This legacy formed a cultural foundation upon which modern movements built, aligning with progressive democratic values.
- Second, the international actors prioritize stability and security in Afghanistan, often overlooking youth-led calls for democratic reform. This external focus has inadvertently contributed to sustaining the existing political status quo. Additionally, it was observed that

many promises for youth inclusion have remained unfulfilled, with most initiatives existing only on paper. Youth are frequently sidelined in decision-making processes, lacking real power or influence regarding actual implementation.

- Third, the 2014 Afghanistan National Youth Policy (ANYP) aimed to address youth challenges by promoting equitable development, but its implementation has faced obstacles, particularly due to resource constraints and a lack of institutional support.
- Fourth, the persistent socio-economic issues—such as high youth unemployment, inadequate health resources, early marriage, and limited educational opportunities—have severely restricted youth from fully participating in Afghanistan's development. The policy intentions for youth remain largely unfulfilled due to systemic issues and a lack of adequate execution.
- Fifth, the ethnic and political divisions among Afghan youth contribute to fragmented movements, reducing their collective impact and enabling entrenched elites to maintain control over political structures.
- Sixth, despite comprising a majority of the population, youth face exclusion from local and national governance due to corruption, ethnicity-based favoritism, and deeply entrenched family-political networks. Young people are frequently sidelined from decision-making processes and high-level roles.
- Seventh, the traditional and centralized view of power in Afghanistan limits youth influence in governance, though they remain active in seeking inclusion through electoral processes and civil engagement.
- Eighth, the research shows that there is a general apathy among the political elite toward development and progress, primarily due to their economic stability. This lack of motivation to enact societal change directly impacts youth inclusion and reduces opportunities for young Afghans to influence decision-making.
- Ninth, although the ANYP aimed to foster youth development across social, economic, and political dimensions, corruption, political instability, and security issues have largely hindered its actual implementation. Many objectives remain unachieved, rendering the policy's impact minimal on the ground.
- Tenth, the Afghan youth movements have faced substantial barriers; their resilience indicates potential for future democratic progress, particularly if institutional reforms enable youth inclusion and representation.
- Eleventh, the rural youth face greater challenges in accessing education, infrastructure, and employment opportunities than urban youth. This disparity fosters a sense of neglect among

rural youth, who often attribute their lack of opportunities to geographical and systemic disadvantages.

- Twelfth, the Afghan youth are increasingly utilizing digital platforms for mobilization, aiming to overcome geographical and ethnic divisions. However, limited digital literacy and access hamper the effectiveness of these efforts.
- Thirteenth, the Afghan youth have expressed frustration over their limited influence in the political sphere, feeling excluded from meaningful participation. Despite making up a significant demographic, youth struggle to break through Afghanistan's entrenched power structures dominated by older elites.
- Fourteenth, the Afghan youth movements have effectively raised awareness of governance issues, calling for accountability and fair representation. Movements like the Enlightenment and Tabasum exemplify the role of youth in challenging established power structures, though systemic resistance limits their broader impact.
- Fifteenth, the youth in Afghanistan view activism as a means to address socio-political marginalization, establishing a foundation for exploring their influence on democratic processes.
- Sixteenth, the gender equality emerged as a critical focus for youth movements, with young activists, particularly women, advocating for equal rights and opportunities. This push for gender equity reflected broader efforts by youth to reshape social norms and challenge traditional limitations in Afghan society.
- Seventeenth, the young Afghan women faced compounded barriers, yet their involvement in youth movements challenged traditional norms and promoted gender equality. Despite societal resistance, female activists advocated for critical issues like education, justice, and healthcare, marking a transformative shift in gender roles within Afghan civil society.
- Eighteenth, the Afghan youth face entrenched barriers to political representation, exacerbated by elite dominance and ethnic divisions. Limited pathways for meaningful political involvement have led young Afghans to express their grievances through movements aimed at accountability and government reform, marking a departure from traditional modes of political participation.

The findings of this research, when analyzed through the integrated framework of Robert Dahl's polyarchy and Resource Mobilization Theory, reveal that Afghan youth movements served as both indicators and agents of democratic transformation. Dahl's principles help explain the gradual expansion of participation and contestation, while RMT elucidates the

organizational and resource-based limitations that curtailed sustainability. The combination of these frameworks demonstrates that Afghanistan's youth-led activism functioned as a transitional force challenging elite dominance and introducing democratic discourse, yet remained constrained by structural, economic, and institutional deficiencies.

21. Hypothesis Evaluation

Hypothesis 1: The youth in Afghanistan is deeply fragmented and pursue diverse goals.

- **Evaluation**: This hypothesis is supported by evidence drawn from secondary data, including national reports, policy documents, and survey-based studies reviewed in this research. Findings from sources such as the *Afghanistan National Youth Policy (2014)*, reports by the *Afghan National Statistics and Information Administration (NSIA)*, and analyses by international organizations cited in the study indicate significant diversity among Afghan youth in terms of socio-economic background, regional location, and political outlook. These sources show that urban youth tend to prioritize higher education, employment opportunities, and political participation, whereas rural youth emphasize access to basic services, local governance, and economic survival. Furthermore, secondary survey-based assessments and policy reviews discussed in this study reveal divergent attitudes among youth on sensitive issues such as women's rights, governance, and social norms, reflecting a broad spectrum of goals shaped by ethnicity, education level, and regional disparities.

Hypothesis 2: The youth subscribe to a set of norms but believe that the political system in Afghanistan is not adequately responsive to them.

- **Evaluation**: The findings demonstrate that Afghan youth possess distinct values, such as a strong commitment to education and social justice, yet express widespread dissatisfaction with the political system's responsiveness. Many young people participated in protests demanding political reform and representation, illustrating their perception that the government fails to address their needs and aspirations effectively.

Hypothesis 3: The youth movement in Afghanistan is geared towards the reinforcement of democracy and equality.

- **Evaluation**: Evidence shows that numerous youth movements actively advocate for democratic values and social equality. For example, the Justice for Farkhunda movement sought accountability for violence against women, emphasizing the demand for equality

and justice in a democratic framework. Additionally, the Enlightenment Movement called for greater educational access and transparency, aligning with democratic ideals and reflecting a commitment to civic engagement.

Hypothesis 4: The youth, drawn from disadvantaged, marginalized, and oppressed sections, have been at the forefront of this movement.

- **Evaluation:** The hypothesis is partially supported. While many activists in Afghan youth movements come from marginalized communities, such as the Hazara ethnic minority, who are driven by unique challenges like discrimination and limited access to resources, youth from other backgrounds have also played significant roles. Activism in Afghanistan includes diverse participants, with both marginalized and relatively more privileged youth contributing to various movements for democratic reform, social equality, and anti-corruption. This indicates that, while marginalized youth are prominent in leading initiatives for change, Afghan youth movements are not exclusively driven by disadvantaged groups but are instead inclusive of broader demographics united by common goals of societal transformation.

All four hypotheses are validated, highlighting the critical role of Afghan youth in advocating for democracy, equality, and social justice within a complex socio-political landscape. Each hypothesis provides a clear framework for understanding the dynamics of youth movements in Afghanistan and their implications for broader societal change.

22. Scope for Further Research

Comparative Studies on Youth Movements: Future research could compare Afghan youth movements with those in similar socio-political contexts, such as other conflict-affected or post-conflict regions. This would highlight unique challenges and shared strategies for democratization.

Impact of Digital Activism: While digital platforms are highlighted in the study, further research could explore their long-term impact on political participation, societal mobilization, and cross-ethnic collaboration among Afghan youth.

Gender-Specific Analysis: The role of young Afghan women in movements remains an underexplored area. Future studies could focus on their unique contributions, challenges, and strategies within youth-led activism.

Policy Evaluation Studies: Further research could evaluate the effectiveness of youth-related policies, such as the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (2014), focusing on their implementation and actual impact on the ground.

Youth Movements in Rural Areas: Most studies, including this one, focus heavily on urban youth. Research that delves into rural youth activism and its distinct dynamics, priorities, and challenges would fill a critical gap.

Post-2021 Youth Movements: Considering the regime change in Afghanistan in 2021, further studies could explore how youth movements adapt to the new political order, including their strategies, focus areas, and survival mechanisms under restrictive environments.

23. Suggestions

1. Strengthen the Afghanistan National Youth Policy (ANYP) implementation.

The ANYP provides a crucial framework for youth development, but its potential is limited by weak implementation. It is recommended that the Afghan government and international stakeholders establish clear mechanisms for accountability, funding, and local-level involvement. Monitoring and evaluation systems should be reinforced to ensure that policies translate into tangible benefits for Afghan youth, particularly in education, employment, and civic engagement.

2. Promote Digital Literacy and Access to Digital Platforms

Afghan youth have shown effective use of digital platforms for mobilization, but limited digital literacy and infrastructure restrict their reach and impact. Investing in digital literacy programs, particularly in rural areas, would empower youth with the skills to mobilize, access information, and engage in democratic processes. Partnerships with international tech organizations could facilitate improved internet access and training in digital activism, helping bridge the geographic and ethnic divides within Afghan youth movements.

3. Enhance Political Representation and Pathways to Leadership for Youth

Afghan youth face systemic barriers to accessing political representation. To address this, the Afghan government could establish quotas for youth in local and national decision-making bodies. Additionally, creating mentorship programs that pair young leaders with experienced policymakers would foster knowledge transfer and support a pipeline of youth leaders equipped

to address Afghanistan's governance challenges. This approach could address the symbolic participation issue, giving youth genuine opportunities to shape policies and political agendas.

4. Develop Sustainable Economic Opportunities Targeted at Youth

Economic instability remains a core issue, with high youth unemployment rates driving disillusionment. Initiatives such as vocational training, youth-focused entrepreneurship programs, and partnerships with the private sector could enhance job prospects. Programs aimed at linking youth with markets and funding for small businesses can empower them as economic contributors, reducing reliance on international aid and reinforcing their role in democratic processes.

5. Foster Cross-Ethnic and Inclusive Youth Movements

Ethnic fragmentation within youth movements weakens collective impact. To counter this, youth organizations and leaders should actively promote inclusive agendas that transcend ethnic boundaries, focusing on shared democratic goals. International organizations can support this by funding projects that encourage cross-ethnic collaboration and dialogue, thus fostering a more unified youth movement with broader societal support.

6. Engage Youth in Peace Processes and Security Discussions

Given the history of conflict and ongoing security issues, involving youth in peace-building efforts is critical for sustainable democratic development. Establishing youth advisory councils within peace negotiation frameworks and providing platforms for young voices in local peace processes would integrate their perspectives on security and stability. Youth involvement in these processes can strengthen social cohesion and increase youth buy-in for peaceful conflict resolution.

7. Increase Focus on Gender Equity in Youth Programs

Gender disparities in Afghanistan limit the participation of young women in both civic and economic arenas. Youth programs should prioritize initiatives that specifically address gender equality, such as scholarships for young women, gender-based violence prevention training, and leadership programs for female youth. Additionally, integrating gender equity goals into the ANYP's objectives would ensure that youth policies comprehensively address the unique challenges that youth women face.

8. Encourage International Support with a Focus on Self-Reliance

While international aid is valuable, over-reliance can hinder the sustainability of youth movements. Future aid programs should focus on building self-reliant local institutions and fostering independent funding sources for youth organizations. This would reduce dependency on foreign aid and enable Afghan youth movements to maintain momentum even amidst changing geopolitical dynamics.

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25. Appendices

List of Articles published

Published a paper entitled ***"Youth and Education in Afghanistan After 2021"*** in Journal of Contemporary Politics, E-ISSN: 2583-6811, Vol. 4, Issue 1, 2025, Pages 41–49. A peer-reviewed journal. DOI: 10.53989/jcp.v4i1.9 (certificate).

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Published a paper entitled ***"Taliban's Return to Power in Afghanistan – Key Factors"*** in Journal of Contemporary Politics**,** E-ISSN: 2583-6811, Vol. 3, Issue 2, 2024, Pages 45–55. A peer-reviewed journal. DOI: 10.53989/jcp.v3i2.32 (certificate).

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